



Fort Worth: Reclaiming Land and History



A view of the public plaza across from Evans Avenue.

Fort Worth, Texas

Fort Worth has made a commitment to redeveloping brownfields around the city into lively business and cultural centers as well as vital greenspace. With the help of a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant, the city, together with private developers, business groups, and neighborhood associations, is working to revitalize older commercial districts into vibrant urban villages.

Historically known for its cattle industry, Fort Worth has grown into a 308-square-mile business center, with prosperous manufacturing, distribution, and technology sectors and a burgeoning population of more than 535,000. Urban sprawl has left the older city areas fallow due to the vast amounts of undeveloped and relatively cheap real estate, making it more attractive for developers to utilize greenfields. As a result, whole sections of roads along commercial corridors within the central city area are marred by abandoned gas stations, dry cleaners, and other commercial facilities.

Particularly hard hit by Fort Worth's investment and development trends is the 25-acre Evans and Rosedale neighborhood, which was a prosperous hub of African-American commerce and culture in the 1930s and 1940s. A quiet, upscale neighborhood filled with professionals and thriving businesses, crowds once flocked to the area to see big band greats like Lionel Hampton play the Zanzibar nightclub or to eat at the Red and White Café. Today, it is one of the city's few remaining original African-American neighborhoods and has fallen into disrepair, with many buildings in need of serious structural assistance and businesses in need of a jump-start.

With assistance from the EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant, Fort Worth is working to revitalize this neighborhood to create the new "Evans and Rosedale Business and Culture District." The renovated district will include an African-American marketplace and cultural center that will attract residents from around the city as well as visitors who come to Fort Worth. Plans for the district include restaurants, jazz venues, a central park and plaza, medical facilities, mixed-use residential buildings, new anchor businesses, and expansion of some existing local businesses.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Through EPA brownfields grant funds, the city completed an environmental site assessment of the Evans and Rosedale neighborhood, covering approximately 110 industrial, commercial, and residential lots or parcels.
- The Evans and Rosedale project has leveraged more than \$13 million in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Economic Development Administration.
- The city developed an innovative "Bust a Brownfield" program to identify other brownfields around Fort Worth. To date, residents have nominated more than 424 possible properties to be targeted for environmental assessment.

"This project has been a real opportunity to teach people how much environmental assessment and redevelopment can contribute to the economic vitality of a neighborhood."

- City Councilman Ralph McCloud, Chair of the Evans and Rosedale Advisory Committee

CONTACTS:

For more information contact
U.S. EPA REGION 6
(214) 665-6444

Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



EDUCATION
HENRY H. BUTLER (1896-1952)

MR. BUTLER WAS BORN TO SHERMAN IN WASHITA. IN 1903, BUTLER'S FATHER MOVED HIM AND FIVE OTHERS TO OKMULGEE TO FORTIFY UNITED STATES ARMY CAMP. BUTLER ESCAPED AND JOINED THE UNITED ARMY. HE ENJOINED IN STEVEN'S CLUB, WHICH BUTLER JOINED IN HIS YOUTHFUL DAYS. HE WAS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF OKMULGEE'S FIGHTING SARGE SCHOOL IN OKMULGEE. HE LATER GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND FORTH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE IN FORTH. BUTLER WAS BORNED BOLDLY INTO THE FORTH IN 1915 AND OWNED THE FIRST SCHOOL FOR BLACK CHILDREN AT MILLER CAMP. A FINE CHURCH IN 1917, BUTLER'S SCHOOL BECAME ONE OF THE FORTH FORTH SCHOOL SYSTEM, WHICH LATER BUILT THE BLACK STUDENTS A FOUR-ROOM SCHOOL, WHERE BUTLER WAS NICE ASSISTANT TO PRINCIPAL L. M. TOWELL.

Section 8 loan, a \$1.2 million U.S. Economic Development Administration grant, and a \$3.25 million HUD Community Development Block Grant. The plaza dedication was held on June 10, the anniversary of the day that Texas slaves learned of their emancipation. Engraved along the plaza is a timeline of significant events that shaped Fort Worth's African-American community, along with tributes to historic figures from the neighborhood and inspirational quotes.

To identify other brownfields around Fort Worth, the city developed an innovative “Bust a Brownfield” program through which residents can recommend that an abandoned industrial facility, dry cleaners, service station, or other commercial establishment be a target for environmental assessment. To date, the citizens of Fort Worth have nominated more than 424 possible properties, and the city’s Brownfields Program has profiled 341 of these properties in a database that tracks the associated locations, sizes, former uses, and existing structures.

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